

New England Colonies in the 17th Century

I. Protestant Reformation and the rise of Puritanism

A. 1517, **Martin Luther** breaks away from the Catholic church; birth of Protestantism

1. Luther declared the Bible alone was the source of God's word
2. Faith alone would determine salvation; he denounced authority of priests and popes
3. Protestantism vs. Catholicism came to dominate European politics for well over the next century.

B. **John Calvin** elaborated on Luther's ideas and founded **Calvinism** in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536)

1. God was all powerful and all-good.
2. Humans because of original sin, were weak and wicked.
3. **Predestination**
 - a. God was all-knowing and knew beforehand who was going to heaven or hell.
-- The "elect" were those chosen by God to have eternal salvation
 - b. "Good works" (such as following the sacraments of the Catholic Church) did not determine salvation.
 - c. However, one could not be immoral since no one knew their status before God
 - d. A conversion experience (an intense identifiable personal experience with God) was seen to be a sign from God that one had been chosen.
-- "visible saints" --After conversion, people expected to lead "sanctified" lives demonstrating holy behavior as a model for the community.

C. **Church of England** and the Puritans

1. **King Henry VIII** broke ties with Roman Catholic church in 1530's and became head of the newly formed **Church of England** or **Anglican Church**.
-- The pope had refused to grant him a divorce; Henry remarried afterwards.
2. Puritans were Protestants who wanted to purify the Anglican Church by removing all its Catholic elements and barring people from the Church who were not committed.
3. Separatists: extreme group of Puritans who wanted to break from the Anglican Church-- later called Pilgrims.
4. James I concerned that Separatists challenged his role as leader of the Church and threatened to force them out of England.

D. Stuart Line of Monarchs: English History as a backdrop to colonization of North America

- James I (r. 1603-1625)
- Charles I (r. 1625-1642)
- 1642-1648 -- English Civil War
- Interregnum under Oliver Cromwell (1648-1658)
- Restoration: Charles II (1660-1685)
- James II (r. 1685-1688)
- "Glorious Revolution" (1688) -- William & Mary; Bill of Rights (1689)

II. Pilgrims go to America

A. First wave of Separatists

1. A group of Separatists left Britain for Holland for freedom to practice Calvinism.
 - a. Led by **John Robinson**
 - b. Later, became unhappy by the "Dutchification" of their children.
 - c. Eventually longed for opportunity to practice their religion as Englishmen
2. Secured rights with Virginia Company to settle within its jurisdiction in Virginia
 - a. Pilgrims agreed to work for 7 years in return for the support of the joint stock company which was comprised of non-separatist investors.
 - b. Profits would be shared among settlers & investors after 7 years.
3. **Mayflower** may have strayed off course & landed off New England coast/ 102 persons.
 - a. Fewer than half were Separatists; only one death during voyage; one birth
 - b. Some historians believe Pilgrims "hijacked" the ship and gained consent of non-separatists by issuing the *Mayflower Compact*.
4. **Plymouth Bay** chosen as settlement site
 - a. Plymouth had been an Indian community that had been killed off by a great plague just a few years earlier.
 - b. Plymouth was outside jurisdiction of Virginia Company
 - c. Settlers thus became squatters: no legal right to land and no recognized gov't.
5. **Mayflower Compact** (not a constitution but an agreement)
 - a. Purpose: To legitimize Pilgrims' settlement outside Virginia by creating a secular document recognizing James I as their sovereign and creating a body of all the settlers with power to devise laws, and elect leaders.
 - Yet Plymouth Colony never possessed a charter; it was denied by the crown.
 - b. Agreement provided for majority rule among settlers (excluding servants and seamen)—became an important seed of democracy.
 - c. Adult male settlers assembled to make laws and conduct open-discussion town meetings.
6. Despite terrible first winter where over ½ the people died, no one left the colony.
7. **Thanksgiving** -- Autumn, 1621
 - a. An English-speaking Indian, **Squanto**, befriended Pilgrims: showed how to plant corn, where to fish, and introduced them to **Massasoit**, leader of the Wampanoags.
 - b. An alliance formed by Pilgrims & Wampanoags for mutual protection against other Indian tribes.
 - c. By fall of 1621, 20 acres of Indian corn provided food for survival.
 - d. Pilgrims adopted Indians' traditional custom of giving thanks at the time of harvest, believing their survival as God's will; lasted 3 days and became an annual event.
 - e. Peace lasted 41 years until Massasoit's death in 1662.

B. Success of the Pilgrims

1. Eventually settled in economically with fur, fish, and lumber.
2. Religion remained paramount in the community
3. **William Bradford** -- prominent leader; elected Governor 30 times
 - To Encourage farming, in 1623 Bradford distributed the land among the settlers.
4. **Miles Standish** -- military leader who was hired to accompany the Pilgrims.

- a. Led so many expeditions against Indians whom he distrusted that he was scolded by John Robinson
 - b. Despite attacks Massasoit honored treaty until his death in 1661.
- C. 1691, the small Plymouth colony of 7,000 people merged with MBC.
 - The Crown had refused to grant Pilgrims a legal charter for Plymouth Plantation.
- III. The **Massachusetts Bay Colony** (founded in 1629)
 - A. Push factors for Puritans
 - 1. Charles I had dismissed Parliament in 1629 and sanctioned anti-Puritan persecution.
 - a. **Archbishop Laud** strongly opposed to any separation from the Church of England.
 - b. Hitherto, moderate Puritans had gathered support in Parliament for reforms
 - c. King refused to guarantee power of parliament or basic rights for people.
 - B. MBC founded in 1629 by non-Separatist Puritans out of fear for their faith and England's future.
 - 1. **Cambridge Agreement:** signed in England, turned the corporate charter into a government that served as its constitution for many years.
 - 2. Puritans would now be out of easy reach of royal authority and the archbishop.
 - C. The "**Great Migration**" (1630's)
 - 1. By 1631, 2,000 colonists had arrived in Boston and had settled a number of towns around it as well.
 - 2. Turmoil in England resulted in 15,000 more immigrants coming to New England (and 60,000 others scattered throughout North America and West Indies.
 - 3. English Civil War (1642-1649) ended the Great Migration
 - a. Puritans remained in England to fight the Royalist forces.
 - b. Puritans in England led by Oliver Cromwell took control of gov't between 1642 & 1660.
 - c. Charles I beheaded in 1649
 - D. John Winthrop - Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony
 - 1. **Covenant Theology:** Winthrop believed Puritans had a covenant with God to lead new religious experiment in New World
 - "**We shall build a city upon a hill**"
 - 2. Most distinguished of the early Massachusetts Bay leaders.
 - a. Elected governor 12 times and set the tone for much of its sense of religious mission.
 - b. Leadership helped Massachusetts to prosper
 - E. Mass. Bay Colony became biggest and most influential of New England communities.
 - Economy: fur trading, fishing, shipbuilding, and some farming (wheat & corn)
- IV. Religion and politics in the "Massachusetts Bible Commonwealth"
 - A. Governing open to all free adult males (2/5 of population) belonging to Puritan congregations;
 - 1. Percentage of eligible officeholders was more than in England.
 - 2. Eventually, Puritan churches grew collectively into the **Congregational Church**
 - 3. Non-religious men and all women could not vote
 - 4. Townhall meetings emerged as a staple of democracy
 - Town governments allowed all male property holders and at times other residents to vote and publicly discuss issues. Majority-rule show of hands.
 - B. Whole purpose of government was to enforce God's laws (part of covenant theology)
 - 1. Provincial gov't under Governor Winthrop was not a democracy

2. Only Puritans -- the "visible saints" -- could be freemen; only freemen could vote
 - a. Distrusted non-Puritan common people.
 - b. Believed democracy was the "meanest and worst" of all forms of government.
 3. Congregational church was "**established**": Non-church members as well as believers required to pay taxes for the gov't-supported church.
 4. Religious dissenters were punished .
- C. Church leadership
1. Influenced admission to church membership by conducting public interrogations of people claiming to have experienced conversion.
 2. **John Cotton** devoted to defending gov'ts duty to enforce religious rules yet advocated a civil government.
 3. Clergymen were not allowed to hold political office
 - a. Congregation had the right to hire and fire ministers and set salaries.
 - b. In effect, a form of separation of church and state.
 - c. Puritans in England had learned their lesson when they suffered at the hands of the "political" Anglican clergy in England.
 4. **Cambridge Platform (1648)**: Voluntary synod where the 4 Puritan colonies of Massachusetts Bay -- Mass., Plymouth, Connecticut & New Haven -- met to work out a congregational form of church gov't in detail.
 - Significance: Congregational church became more uniform throughout New England.
- D. Representative legislative assembly formed in 1634 and after 1642 assembly met separately as a lower house and was most influential part of gov't.
- E. Early dissension in the MBC.
1. **Quakers**, who believed in an inner light and not in theology, flouted the authority of the Puritan clergy and were persecuted.
 2. **Anne Hutchinson** -- believed in **antinomianism**
 - a. Accordingly, the "elect" didn't need to obey God's or man's law because they were predestined for salvation.
 - b. She held prayer meetings at home to discuss John Cotton's sermons with other women; this was taboo for a non-clergy member to do.
 - c. Her ideas were viewed by the clergy as heresy and she was brought to trial in 1638.
 - i. She claimed direct revelation from God -- even higher a heresy.
 - ii. She was banished from colony; set out for Rhode Island pregnant
 - d. Eventually settled in N.Y. where she & all but 1 of 14 kids killed by Indians
 3. **Roger Williams** -- minister from Salem
 - a. Extreme Separatist who challenged legality of Plymouth and Bay Colony charters because land belonged to Indians and was not the king's land to grant.
 - Claimed colony took land from Indians w/o fair compensation
 - b. "**liberty of conscience**"
 - i. Williams denied authority of civil gov't to regulate religious behavior.
 - Stated gov't could only punish civil crimes while the church alone had responsibility for religious discipline.
 - Stated that no man should be forced to go to church.
 - In effect, challenged the basis of the Massachusetts Bay government.
 - ii. Used "wall of separation" metaphor for church and state separation.

- Jefferson would later use this metaphor to disestablish religion in VA which later influenced "No Establishment" clause of the Constitution.
 - c. General Court banished him from colony in October, 1635 and Williams fled in winter of 1636 to Narragansett Bay; sheltered by Indian friends.
 - d. He purchased lands from Indians and founded the community of Providence, accepting all settlers regardless of their beliefs.
- E. Later challenges to Puritanism
1. First generation Puritans began losing their religious zeal as time went on.
 - a. Large population influx dispersed Puritan population onto outlying farms away from control of church and neighbors.
 - b. After the wave of dissent in the 1630s and 1640s (e.g. Hutchinson and Williams) conversions decreased dramatically.
 - Children of non-converted members could not be baptized.
 - c. The **jeremiad**, taken from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, was used by preachers to scold parishioners into being more committed to their faith.
 - d. Conversions continued to decrease as 2nd generation Puritans had trouble getting their conversions authenticated by the church, thus preventing their children from being baptized.
 2. The "**Half-Way Covenant**" instituted in 1662 to attract more members by giving partial membership to people not converted (but who had been baptized as children).
 - The children of these Half-Way members were allowed to be baptized.
 3. Eventually, Puritan churches baptized anyone
 - a. Distinction between the "elect" and other members of society subsided.
 - b. Strict religious purity was sacrificed for wider religious participation.
 - Women began making up a larger % of congregations.
 4. **Salem Witch Trials, 1692**
 - a. Massachusetts suffered political, religious, and military upheaval that led to widespread paranoia and unrest.
 - Not uncommon for Europeans and colonists in the 16th and 17th centuries to believe that the devil worked through witches in the real world.
 - b. First accusations began when young girls, after listening to voodoo tales from a black servant, began behaving oddly.
 - i. Which hunt resulting in a reign of horror ensued after certain older women were allegedly witches
 - ii. The young female accusers were from the poor western part of the community and accused the more prosperous people in the eastern part.
 - c. After witch trials, 19 people hanged, 1 person pressed to death, and 2 dogs were hanged
 - d. **Cotton Mather**, one of most prominent clergymen in Massachusetts, tacitly supported the witch trials and thus weakening the prestige of the clergy.
- V. Completing the New England Colonies
- A. **Rhode Island (1644)**
1. Williams built Baptist church at Providence (probably 1st Baptist church in America)
 - a. Complete freedom of religion, even for Jews and Catholics. Also Quakers.
 - b. No oaths required regarding one's religious beliefs
 - c. No compulsory attendance at worship

- d. No taxes to support a state church
- 2. Provided simple manhood suffrage in the colony from the outset
 - Opposed to special privilege of any sort
- 3. RI saw immigration dissenters from Bay Colony which led to most individualistic and independent population (along with North Carolina).
- 4. Given charter from Parliament in 1644; squatters now had rights to land
- B. **Connecticut** (founded in 1636)
 - 1. May 1636, group of Boston Puritans led by **Rev. Thomas Hooker** moved into the Connecticut River valley area and founded the town of **Hartford**
 - a. Three valley towns of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield established Connecticut colony.
 - b. Hooker objected to arbitrary strict power of Gov. Winthrop and MBC's magistrates.
 - c. His congregation also wanted more lands that MBC was unwilling grant.
 - 2. **New Haven** founded in 1638
 - a. Founded by Puritans wanting stricter and closer church-gov't alliance than Massachusetts (in contrast to Hooker's ideas)
 - b. When the colony harbored two judges who condemned Charles I to death, Charles II sought revenge by granting colonial charter to Connecticut which merged New Haven with more democratic settlements in Connecticut Valley
 - 3. **Fundamental Orders** drafted in 1639 by new Connecticut River colony
 - a. First modern constitution in American history
 - b. Established a democracy controlled by "substantial" citizens
 - i. Gov't should be based on consent of the people.
 - ii. Patterned Massachusetts' gov't.
 - c. Foundation for Connecticut's colonial charter and later, its state constitution.
- C. **Maine** absorbed by MBC in 1677 after purchase from the heirs of its founders
 - Remained part of Massachusetts for nearly 150 years until Compromise of 1820.
- D. **New Hampshire** (1679) -- absorbed in 1641 by Massachusetts Bay colony
 - 1. Primarily fishing and trading economy
 - 2. 1679, Charles II arbitrarily separated N.H. from MBC after being annoyed with MBC's apparent greed in land acquisition. N.H. became royal colony.
- VI. **New England Confederation** (1643) -- MBC, Plymouth, Connecticut & New Haven
 - A. **Pequot War (1636-1637)** -- Despite Puritan victory over Indians, NE colonies realized collective security was necessary for future defense.
 - 1. Relations between Puritans & Pequots strained in years preceding the war in southern Connecticut and Rhode Island as Puritans wanted Indians to move
 - 2. Connecticut towns sent 90 men who opted to attack a smaller village of non-combatants where 400 Indian men, women and children were slain
 - 3. By summer's end, most remaining Pequots either captured, sold as slaves to West Indies, or fled for shelter to their former enemies.
 - 4. Puritans used Biblical passages to justify extermination of the Pequots.
 - B. In response to Pequot War, New England Confederation founded in 1643.
 - 1. Purpose: defense against foes (e.g. Indians, French, and Dutch).
 - 2. Significance: First milestone on road to colonial unity.
 - 3. 1st era of "salutary neglect": Eng. Civil War in 1640s left colonies to fend for themselves.
 - 4. Organization

- a. Exclusively Puritan (Maine & Rhode island not allowed)
- b. Helped to solve intercolonial problems (e.g. runaway servants and criminals)

C. **King Philip's War (1675)**

1. New England Confederation put to the test during war with Indian chieftain **King Philip** (Metacom) -- Wampanoag Chief, son of Massasoit
2. 52 of 90 Puritan towns attacked; burning or other damage ensued; 13 destroyed
-- Indians copied the Puritan attacks on noncombatants in the Pequot War.
3. Colonists victorious; many Indians sold into slavery.
-- Metacom executed and his head was cut-off and displayed for 20 years.
4. Impact of war: bloodiest ever fought on New England soil.

VII. **Dominion of New England**

A. **Charles II** clamps down on New England Confederation

1. Relative independence among the colonists due to salutary neglect ran contrary to the wishes of the restored English throne, royalists, and Church of England.
-- Puritan hopes of purifying the English Church were destroyed
2. MBC charter revoked in 1684 in response to its resisting royal orders

B. **Dominion of New England** (1686)

1. **Mercantilism:** colonies existed for the benefit of the mother country: wealth, prosperity, and self-sufficiency.
2. 1685, Lords of Trade created Dominion of New England Goal to unite all colonies from Nova Scotia to the Delaware River under 1 gov't
3. Purpose of DNE:
 - a. Enforce **Navigation laws** created to protect mercantilist system
-- Trade with non-British colonies & allies forbidden
 - b. Bolstered colonial defense against Indians, Dutch, and French.
4. 1686, James II appointed **Sir Edmund Andros** to lead the DNE to oversee all of New England and later New York and East and West Jersey
 - a. Colonists despised Andros for his autocracy and allegiance to Anglican Church
 - b. Town meetings forbidden; all land titles revoked.
 - c. Heavy restrictions on the courts, press, and schools
 - d. Taxed the people without consent of their representatives
 - e. Enforced unpopular Navigation Laws and suppressed smuggling
-- Smuggling became common and even honorable

C. England's "**Glorious Revolution**" triggered "First American revolution"

1. Catholic James II dethroned in England and replaced by his daughter Mary and her Dutch-born Protestant husband William III (William of Orange).
-- Parliament passed a "**Declaration of Rights**" that forbade the king from levying taxes w/o its consent & subordinated the monarch to the common law.
2. News of James II's removal prompted Boston leaders to arrest Andros and ship him back to England.
3. Unrest spread from New England to the Carolinas
4. The DNE collapsed and enforcement of Navigation Laws disrupted.

D. Post-Glorious Revolution New England

1. 1691, Massachusetts made a royal colony with a new charter & royal governor.
2. Tighter administrative control by the crown over British America resulted.

VIII. New England Life and Contributions to the American Character

A. Impact of Geography

1. Lack of abundant soil forged the Puritan characteristic of frugality and hard work.
 - a. Trade became cornerstone of colony's economy.
 - b. Less of an ethnic mix; immigrants not eager to settle in soil deprived region.
2. Lumbering, shipbuilding, and fishing became important due to abundant forests and good harbors.

B. **Puritan contribution to American character**

1. Democracy (within the Congregational church) via town meetings and voting rights to church members (starting in 1631)
 - a. Led to democracy in political gov't ("Body of Liberties" in 1641 may have been world's first bill of rights).
 - b. **Townhall meetings** where freemen met together and each man voted was democracy in its purest form.
 - c. New England villagers regularly met to elect their officials, appoint schoolmasters and attend to civic issues (e.g. road repair)
2. Perfectibility of humankind and society
 - a. Puritanism provided unity of purpose & concern for moral health of community
 - i. Argued vehemently against slavery on moral grounds
 - ii. Ideas lay the foundation for later reform movements: abolition of slavery, women's rights, education, prohibition, prison reform, etc.
 - b. Protestant work ethic: those who were faithful and worked hard and succeeded were seen favorably by God.

C. Education

1. **Harvard College** founded in 1636 to train the clergy; first college in the colonies.
-- In contrast, Virginians did not found college until 1693 (William & Mary College)
2. **Massachusetts School of Law** (1642 & 1647)
 - a. Towns with more than 50 families required to provide elementary education to enable children to read the Bible.
 - b. Major reason why New England became most literate section of the country.
-- Majority of adults knew how to read and write

D. Small villages and farms formed basis for the tightly knit society

1. Necessary to provide security from bordering Indians, French and Dutch.
2. After 1640s, outsiders generally not welcome in villages

E. Extremely strict and conservative lifestyle

IX. New England Family

- A. New England's climate less deadly than in southern Colonies
 1. Cooler weather and clean water = less disease
 2. Added 10 years to life spans compared to England; life expectancy was 70 yrs
- B. Puritans tended to migrate as families rather than as individuals
- C. Families had many children.
- D. Strong families stability produced healthy adults and strong social structure.

Main Ideas:

1. What political and religious circumstances in England led to the formation of New England?
2. How did religion play a role in the development of the New England colonies.

3. How did New England differ socially, economically, and politically from the southern colonies?
4. Trace the development of the emerging political unity of New England in the 17th century.

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